Articulating The Intention

By Ibn Taymiyyah

Shaykh al-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah was asked:

Question 1: Concerning the one who causes confusion in the lines of prayer and those around him by articulating the intention loudly.

This was objected to but it did not deter him from persisting in this. A person said to him, ‘what you are doing is not from the religion of Allaah and you are contradicting the Sunnah.’ He replied, ‘this is from the religion of Allaah which He sent His Messengers with and it is obligatory upon every Muslim to do this and similarly the Qur`aan should be recited loudly behind an imaam.’ So did the Messenger of Allaah (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) or any o-ne of his Companions use to do this? Did any o-ne of the Four Imaams or any of the Muslim scholars enjoin this? And if the Messenger of Allaah (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) and his Companions and the scholars did not do this in prayer then what is obligatory upon the o-ne who attributes this to them and does this? Is it permissible for a Muslim to come to his aid with even o-ne word if he does this and attributes this to the religion by saying to those who are objecting, ‘everything that he is doing in his religion is what he desires and your objection is based upon ignorance!’ So are they correct in this or not?

The Answer:

All praises and thanks are due to Allaah. Articulating the intention in a loud voice is not legislated according to the opinion of all the Muslim scholars. The Messenger of Allaah (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) did not do it and neither did his Khaleefs, Companions, or the Salaf of this nation and their Imaams. Hence whosoever claims that this is part of the Religion of Allaah and that it is obligatory then it is necessary to teach him the Sharee`ah and ask him to repent from this opinion and if he still persists in this saying then he is to be killed. Rather the intention that is obligatory for the actions of worship such as *wudu*, *ghusl*, *salaah*, *siyaam* and *zakaah* etc. finds its place in the heart by agreement (*ittifaaq*) of the Imaams of the Muslims.

The intention is the desire to do something and the place for desire is in the heart and not upon the tongue by agreement of those possessing intelligence. So if a person were to intend something in his heart then this intention would be correct and proper according to the Four Imaams and in fact all of the Imaams of the Muslims – their former ones and latter ones – there is no difference concerning this arising from those that deserve to be followed and those whose rulings deserve to be paid consideration.

However some of the later followers of the Imaams thought that the articulation of the intention was obligatory but they did not say that doing so in a loud voice was obligatory. Despite this, their opinion is erroneous, contradicting the consensus (*ijmaa*) of the Muslims. This due to the fact that it is known by necessity in the Religion of Islaam to the one who knows the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) and the sunnah of his Khaleefs and knows how the Companions and their students used to pray that they did not articulate the intention and neither did the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) command them to do so and neither did he teach this to any of his Companions.

Instead it is established in the Saheehs of Bukhaaree and Muslim that he (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) said to the Bedouin, *"when you stand for prayer say the takbeer and then recite what is easy for you from the Qur`aan."*

In the Sunan it is reported from him (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) that he said,

"the key to prayer is purification, it is entered by saying the takbeer and exited by saying the tasleem."

In Saheeh Muslim from Aa`ishah (radi Allahu Anha) that the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) used to start the prayer by saying the takbeer and reciting '**All praise is due to Allaah….**' [i.e. *al-Faatihah*].

It is established by mutawaatir transmission and the consensus of the Muslims that the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) and the Companions used to commence the prayer with the takbeer and it is not reported by a Muslim, neither from the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) or from his Companions, that they used to articulate the intention be it silently or loudly. It is known that had the case been otherwise then for sure it would have been reported for it is known that it is impossible according to the Sharee`ah and habit for the people reporting something mutawaatir to hide such a thing. Therefore due to the fact that no-one reports this it is safe to say with certainty that it did not occur.

This is why the later Legal Jurists differed over whether articulating the intention was something recommended alongside the intention in the heart. A group of the followers of Abu Haneefah, ash-Shaafi`ee and Ahmad considered it to be recommended while another group of the followers of Maalik, Ahmad and others did not consider it to be recommended, this being textually reported by Ahmad and others. Rather this latter group considered it to be a despicable innovation saying that had it been recommended then the Messenger of Allaah (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) would have done it or at least ordered it for he (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) explained everything that would cause one to draw close to Allaah, especially the prayer whose manner of performance is to be taken only from him. It is established from him in the Saheeh that he said, *"pray as you have seen me praying."* Therefore this group said that adding this articulation to the prayer is of the same level as adding new actions of worship (to the Religion) such as the one who adds the *adhaan* and *iqaamah* to the *Eed* prayers or the one who adds two *rak`ahs* of prayer on Marwah while performing the circuit between Safah and Marwah.

Furthermore they said that articulating the intention is also wrong according to the intellect for the saying of someone 'I intend to do so and so' is of the same level as him saying 'I intend to eat this food so that I may satisfy my appetite' or 'I intend to wear these clothes so that I may cover myself' and other such intentions which are already present in the heart and therefore repugnant to articulate. Allaah said,

"Say: would you teach Allaah your religion when Allaah knows whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth?" [49:16]

A group of the Salaf said concerning the saying of Allaah,

"We feed you seeking only the Face of Allaah" [76:9] {1}

‘They did not say this upon their tongues rather Allaah knew this from their hearts and informed us of this.’

In summary: there is no difference concerning the necessity of having the intention in the heart, as for articulating the intention then there is a difference amongst the later scholars whether it is detestable or recommended. As for articulating it loudly then this is detestable, forbidden and not legislated by agreement of the Muslims, the same goes for repeating the articulation in a louder voice.

This is true for the one leading the prayer, the one following the imaam and the one who is praying alone. It is not legislated for all of these to articulate the intention loudly or repeat this articulation by agreement of the Muslims. Indeed they forbid this, rather it is not even allowed for the one who is praying alone to recite loudly in the case that this harms someone else. The Messenger of Allaah (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) went to his Companions while they were praying and said, *"all of you are intimately conversing with his Lord so do not recite over each other."* As for the one who is following an imaam then the Sunnah is for him to recite silently by agreement of the Muslims, but if he were to, on some occasions, say a part of the *dhikr* loudly then there is no problem in this. For example if the imaam were to sometimes say a verse loudly in a prayer which is to be read silently. It is established in the Saheeh from Abu Qataadah that he (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) would sometimes let them hear a verse in the Dhuhr and Asr prayers.

And it is established in the Saheeh that from the Companions who were following him (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) in prayer were some who would say the opening supplication loudly and say the supplication when rising from *ruku`* loudly and the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) did not object to any of this.

The one who persists in performing a bid`ah and considering it to be good then it is desirable to punish him in such a way that would deter him and those like him from such things. Whosoever attributes something false to the Messenger of Allaah (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) has erred and if he knows and does not repent then he is to be punished. It is not lawful for anyone to speak about the religion without knowledge or to introduce into the religion something that is not part of it.

As for the saying, ‘everyone can do in his religion what he desires’ then this is a serious statement that is obligatory to repent from and if it is not then its proponent should be punished, rather persisting upon the likes of this statement necessitates killing. It is not upon anyone to do anything in the religion except for that which has been legislated by Allaah and His Messenger and not to do anything based on his whims and desires. Allaah says,

"And who is more misguided then one who follows his desires without guidance from Allaah?" [28:50]

"And many are misguided by their desires through ignorance."[6:119]

"And do not follow desires such that you are misguided from the Way of Allaah"[38:26]

"And do not follow the desires of a people who were aforetime misguided and misguided many and went far astray."[5:77]

"Do you see the one who has taken his desires as his god? Would you be a guardian over him? Or do you think that most of them hear or understand? They are as cattle – nay, further astray."[25:43-44]

"And no by your Lord they cannot have faith until they make you to judge the disputes between them and then not find in themselves any aversion to what you have ruled and submit totally."[4:65]

And it is reported (*ruwiya*) from the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) that he said,

"By the one in Whose Hand is my soul, none of you can have faith until his very desires comply to what I have come with." {2}

Allaah said,

"Do you not see those who pretend that they have believed in what has been revealed to you and what has been revealed before you desiring to seek the ruling of Taaghut when they have been commanded to reject it. Satan desires to misguide them far astray. And when it is said to them: Come to what Allaah has revealed and to the Messenger you see the hypocrites turn from you in aversion." [4:60-61]

"Or do they have partners with Allaah who legislate in the religion that which Allaah has not given permission for?" [42:21]

"Alif Laam Meem Saad. A Book that is revealed to you so let there be no aversion in your heart from it, that you may warn thereby and a Reminder to the believers. Follow that which has been revealed from your Lord and do not follow any other protectors besides Him. Little do you take heed!" [7:1-3]

"And if the Truth had followed their desires then indeed the heavens and the earth and whosoever is in there would have been corrupted." [23:71]

The verses like this in the Qur`aan are many and clarify that it is upon the servant to follow the truth which Allaah sent His Messenger with and not make his religion based upon his desires.

And Allaah knows best.

FOOTNOTES:

{1} From amongst them Mujaahid and Sa`eed bin Jubair as quoted in Tafseer at-Tabaree.

{2} The hadeeth is reported as one of an-Nawawee's 40 Hadeeth and it is da`eef. Refer to 'Jaami al-Uloom wal Hikm' (2: 317-318) of ibn Rajab al-Hanbalee. It was also declared da`eef by al-Albaanee in his checking to 'as-Sunnah' of ibn Abee Aasim and in his notes upon 'Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh.' Ibn Taymiyyah was correct in not attributing this hadeeth with certainty to the Messenger of Allaah (sallallahu alaihi wa salaam) and in using a term which denotes that he considered the hadeeth to be inauthentic.

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